

Emancipation Celebrations in Windsor, Ontario

Title: Emancipation Celebrations in Windsor, Ontario

Subtitle: Reading, Questions, Interview

Duration: 2-4 classes

Best Course(s) Fit: History, English, The History of a Canadian Ethnic Group

Historical Question: How were Emancipation Day Celebrations an expression of Black joy and resistance?

Background Information

When the Abolition of Slavery Act passed, effective August 1, 1834, Black people throughout the British Empire had every reason to celebrate. It was the first time that they were able to live as free people. Black communities across Canada began to commemorate the end of slavery throughout most of the British Empire on August 1. Parades, picnics, talent shows, beauty contests, dances, church services, and a host of other cultural activities were held in the name of celebrating freedom.

From the Depression era until 1967, annual Emancipation Day celebrations on Aug. 1 in Windsor drew big acts, such as the Supremes, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jesse Owens, Duke Ellington, Stevie Wonder, and many more.

The festival was popular enough to temporarily double the city's population and draw politicians and civil rights activists from all over to hear people talk about the struggle for equality. Windsor's Emancipation Celebration was known as "The Greatest Freedom Show on Earth."

Emancipation Celebrations continue to be held throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, even in Ontario.



Source: <https://bizxmagazine.com/2021-emancipation-day-windsor/>

Tasks: 1. Read the articles. 2. Explore the images. 3. Answer the questions using complete sentences. 4. Write a paragraph answering the historical question.

Document A - The Windsor Star August 2, 1943

Race Equality, World Unity Is Emancipation Day Plea

WINDSOR WINS PRAISE FOR TOLERANCE FROM JACKSON PARK SPEAKER

"It is as futile to try holding back the dawn as to try holding back the rendezvous of the common people with the new world to come," Dr. Adam Clayton Powell, New York alderman, told a crowd of 7,500 persons at the 111th celebration of Emancipation Day in Jackson Park yesterday.

NO ROOM FOR HATE

"In tomorrow's world, there will be no room for those who hate one another; for those who oppress any group or who hold their brothers cheap and exploit them; for those who think only in terms of nations and states. The handwriting is on the wall," he said. Quoting a Negro spiritual, he added, "we're on our journey now and nobody's goin' to turn us 'round'."

In a brilliant speech, before an enthusiastic audience comprised chiefly of colored people from Detroit and Windsor, Dr. Powell made stirring reference to the tragic race riots in Detroit, and gave tremendous praise to the Negroes who are fighting on all the American fronts.

"Mussolini really started to run," he said, "when he saw the 99 Pursuits (an American Negro squadron) headed

for Sicily, and the day the Nazis see the whites and the blacks marching into their land together, they'll say 'Great God, democracy's here, let me go'."

BEGAN WITH PARADE

The Emancipation Day program began with a parade from the City Hall Park to Jackson Park. About 2,000 persons participated in the colorful parade, and thousands of Windsorites and Detroiters lined Ouellette avenue to watch it.

Civic welcome was given the visitors by Mayor Arthur J. Reaume. "In this hour of great strife," he said, "peoples of all races, colors and creeds must stand together."

The parade was led by two Negroes in the uniforms of the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Bands of the American Legion posts, headed by young majorettes, were the highlights of the parade, with veterans of American wars, women's auxiliaries, marching clubs, drill teams, Knights of Pythias, and others participating.

Dr. Powell lauded the Canadian

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military for accepting the colored boys into the forces without forming special regiments. "We have black and white regiments. You have democracy marching," he commented.

ENVIES WINDSOR

Regarding the riots, he said, "I envy you your city, your police, the dignity of your white people and the character of your Negro people. If we had gentlemen for policemen in Detroit, Reaume instead of Jeffries, and your dignified white people, we would never have had the shame and disgrace of June.

"I was there, and I saw three white sailors save a colored boy from the hoodlums; I saw an American army boy rescue another colored boy; and I saw 300 American Fascists storm a trolley car to get a Negro; and I saw a Pearl Harbor veteran turn back some other white because, he said, a Negro boy had manned his gun, and he knew what was right and wrong." Dr. Powell said.

He told of receiving a letter from the Ku Klux Klan in New York on June 28—the letter he turned over to the F.B.I., which said that unless the Negroes decided to stop going after white men's jobs, the Detroit riots would look like a tea party compared to what was coming in New York.

"We have one million blacks in New York," he said, "and we have five million whites who are not going to bow down to any kind of American Fascism.

ALL MUST HELP

"The day of the poll tax, of enslavement has passed, and the world has to be free or democracy is a thing of the past and we can start getting ready for World War No. 3. As long as there is one slave no man shall be free, and that is an individual challenge to all men," the speaker asserted.

Declaring that his own grandfather had been a branded slave, he said that he would never cease his cause until the memory of the branding is wiped from his own heart and from the conscience of America.

FULL CITIZENSHIP

He urged an end to Uncle Toms and Jim Crow, and said "Negroes have been on this continent long enough to de-

mand full citizenship now. America can get its fifth columnist from any other quarter, but despite riots, lynching, poll tax and such, the Negroes are the most loyal group in the United States."

Mrs. Jerene Gurley Macklin of Detroit was in charge of the program which included the singing of Negro spirituals by choirs of Windsor and Detroit, and solos by Mrs. Nelle Dobson Plante, soprano; Edward Lockett, baritone; and Marvin Dupre, Tenor.

Bert Laley's girls and boys joined in the ceremonies under direction of Stanley Robinson.

Members of the American Legion participated in the colorful pageant of flags of the United Nations.

The invocation was given by Rev. I. H. Edwards, pastor of the Sandwich Baptist Church, Rev. C. L. Wells, pastor of the First Baptist Church introduced Mayor Reaume, and Ramon Scruggs of Detroit also spoke.

Rev. Robert L. Bradby, pastor of the Greater King Solomon Baptist Church of Detroit, introduced Dr. Powell.

Eddie Tolan, of Detroit, 1932 Olympic star, presented prizes to the best bands in the parade.

CONTINUES TODAY

The Emancipation Day celebrations will continue today, with a race between Jesse Owens, colored Olympic star, and Lieutenant John W. Loaring, R.C.N., another Olympic star. In the early evening, an international beauty contest will be held.

Today's program, which will begin at 3.30 p.m., will also include recreational sports, an exhibition by hoofers and jitterbugs from Detroit, and a dance in the Jackson Park dance pavilion.

Held in Jails

CANBERRA, August 2.—Army Minister Forde of Australia has been called on by protesting citizens to establish detention barracks for soldiers held in jails for military offenses. At Goulburn, New South Wales, more than 100 military prisoners mix with hardened criminals. Most of them are youths whose high spirit caused them to break army regulations, it is declared. "What will be the social outlook of these youngsters when they are released after months and even years of mixing with criminals?" the citizens ask.

Document B – R.C.A.F. Refused Service in Windsor

Excerpt adapted from: November 15, 1943 The Windsor Star

Wanted To Lay Charge

Member of R.C.A.F. Says Restaurant Refused to Serve Him

An 19-year-old colored member of the Royal Canadian Air Force walked into the city police station yesterday afternoon and said he wanted to lay an information against the proprietor of a local lunch.

DISCRIMINATION TOLD

"What for?" asked Constable Thomas Smith, who met the young AC2 at the counter.

"Because he wouldn't serve me a cup of coffee," was the reply.

"It is no use, a lot of them won't do that," replied the constable. "There's nothing you can do about it."

"Am I going overseas to fight for such things as this?" said the airman, setting down his kit.

"I am sorry," said Constable Smith. "We have a lot of chaps just like yourself come in and report the same thing. There isn't anything we can do about it."

"What do you think I am in this uniform for?" asked the colored youth. "Am I wearing it just to be insulted?"

OFFICER IS SORRY

The officer shook his head. "Sorry." "Do you think I am wearing this uniform just to show off, just to be proud of it?" continued the indignant airman.

"I would be very proud of it," said the constable.

"I am going overseas to fight, and that's the kind of thing I am going over to fight for, is it?" asked the youth, remarking "So that's the kind of people in Windsor."

As the airman picked up his kit preparatory to going, a reporter asked: "Do you mind telling me where you are from?"

"Amherstburg."

"And to where are you en route?" "To Trenton, just stopped off here," was the reply.

"What restaurant turned you down?" The airman named the restaurant. "What method did they employ?"

"A girl who was serving just told me I couldn't get a cup of coffee in here."

The colored lad picked up his kit and left the station a minute or so later. The reporter and constable looked at one another. "That's the way it is," said the constable.

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"What do you think I am in this uniform for?" asked the coloured youth. "Am I wearing it just to be insulted? Just to show off? Just to be proud?"

"I would be very proud."

"I am going overseas to fight and that's the kind of thing I am going over to fight for, is it?" asked the youth. "So, that's the kind of people in Windsor."

The airman got ready to leave.

"What restaurant turned you down?"

The airman named the restaurant.

"A girl who was serving just told me I couldn't get a cup of coffee here."

The young man left, and the constable looked at the reporter and said, "that's the way it is."

Document C – Children at Windsor’s Emancipation Celebration



Emancipation Celebration, 1943 The Windsor Star August 3, 1943

Document D - The Windsor Star July 31, 1943

Emancipation Day

The colored people of Windsor and district are looking forward to their two-day celebration of Emancipation Day at Jackson Park this coming week-end. August 1 and 2 have been set aside for the observance.

There will be addresses and a musical program on Sunday with a full program of entertainment on the Monday.

The colored people always have a happy time at these Emancipation Day gatherings. It is one of their big holidays in the year, an event which they anticipate with glee. It is the anniversary of their freedom from slavery in all the British Dominions. In 1807 the slave-trade had been abolished. Then, in 1833, slavery, itself, was abolished by the British. The law became effective on August 1, 1834.

Some confuse the Emancipation Day proceedings in Canada with Abraham Lincoln and the American Civil War of 1861-1865. It is not an anniversary of that event. Emancipation Day goes back much farther, reaching 110 years into the history of the British Empire.

Document E – Jackson Park, Windsor, Ontario



<https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/windsor-to-celebrate-emancipation-day-with-food-music-and-history>

Document F – Emancipation Celebration Parade, Windsor



<https://www.uwindsor.ca/dailynews/2021-02-08/alumni-recall-emancipation-day-celebrations-past>

Document G – Jackson Park, Windsor



<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/emancipation-day-windsor-house-of-commons-celebration-1.5964949>

Document A	How does Adam Clayton Powell feel about race relations in Windsor?
	Why might he have felt that way?
Document B	What does this article reveal about race relations in Windsor?
	How is Document #2 different from or similar to Document #1?
	Which is more credible and why?

Document C	What is interesting or surprising in this photo? Why?
Document D	Given this document and Document B, do you agree or disagree with the following phrase, “while experiencing racism in their daily lives, Black community members still sought out and experienced happiness and togetherness as they fought against oppression?” Explain your position and use evidence from the articles to support it.
Document E	What does this photo tell you about the people in it?
Document F	What stands out to you in this photo? Why?
Document G	What does this photo reveal about Emancipation Celebrations in Windsor?

Paragraph Writing

How were Emancipation Celebrations an expression of Black joy and resistance? You must use evidence from at least three documents (articles or images) to support your claims.

Your paragraph must include:

- ✓ a topic sentence
- ✓ 3 details/examples and explanations
- ✓ a conclusion sentence

